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SUBJECT: Jalili's Press Appearances in Belgium Countered by former IAEA Official

REF: Brussels 125

¶1. (U) Summary: Iranian NSA Said Jalili's stop in Brussels included several press sessions and an appearance at the MFA-affiliated Egmont Institute of International Relations. The Iranian unsurprisingly used both occasions to peddle the standard "not a delinquent/just misunderstood" line. The local press found a good way to undercut several of Jalili's extravagant claims by drawing on the expertise of Pierre Goldschmidt, a former senior IAEA official of Belgian origin. End summary.

¶2. (U) Jalili spouted one consistent line in a series of press interviews. As he told the francophone daily Le Soir on January 25, "Iran has always met its NPT obligations." He added that Iran has implemented a number of confidence-building measures, had suspended uranium enrichment for two years, had freely observed the NPT additional protocol, and had allowed IAEA inspections to do their work unhindered. As a result of these actions, Jalili claimed that IAEA Director El Baradei had made clear in his recent reports that Iran was indeed limiting itself to peaceful nuclear activities.

¶3. (U) The local press offered an informed critic of Jalili by quoting Belgium's Pierre Goldschmidt, who until recently was IAEA deputy-director. Goldschmidt said that Jalili had made erroneous statements, adding that Iran had imported nuclear material, well ahead of declaring them, and that the material was used in the Kalaye Electric Company three years ahead of being discovered by the IAEA. Goldschmidt added that the IAEA had recently found documents detailing production of enriched uranium hemispheres, which only have military usage. Moreover, after four and a half year investigating, the IAEA has not yet been able to establish that Iran has no hidden nuclear activities. Iran failed last November to produce the sort of information it had supplied in the past.

¶4. (U) Jalili attempted in a separate press comment to make much out of what he described as the "disunity" of the UNSC P-5. The recent Berlin meeting was an example of this disunity, he claimed. Jalili repeated that the IAEA's November report demonstrated that the accusations leveled against Iran were baseless. In addition, the recent U.S. intelligence report allegedly showed Iran's present nuclear activities were "peaceful."

¶5. (U) Comment: the careful (and welcome) effort to refute Jalili with Goldschmidt's expertise provides strong evidence of the widespread skepticism here about Iran's nuclear claims. The Belgian government, which consistently has followed the lead of the U.S., Britain, France, and Germany on this issue, can count on broad public support. End comment.
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